

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

JUNE 14, 1878.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. WADLEIGH, from the Committee on Privileges and Elections, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill S. Res. 12.]

*The Committee on Privileges and Elections, to whom was referred the resolution (S. Res. 12) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and certain petitions for and remonstrances against the same, make the following report:*

This proposed amendment forbids the United States or any State to deny or abridge the right to vote on account of sex.

If adopted, it will make several millions of female voters, totally inexperienced in political affairs, quite generally dependent upon the other sex, all incapable of performing military duty and without the power to enforce the laws which their numerical strength may enable them to make, and comparatively very few of whom wish to assume the irksome and responsible political duties which this measure thrusts upon them.

An experiment so novel, a change so great, should only be made slowly and in response to a general public demand, of the existence of which there is no evidence before your committee.

Petitions from various parts of the country, containing by estimate about 30,000 names, have been presented to Congress asking for this legislation.

They were procured through the efforts of woman-suffrage societies, thoroughly organized, with active and zealous managers. The ease with which signatures may be procured to any petition is well known. The small number of petitioners, when compared with that of the intelligent women in the country, is striking evidence that there exists among them no general desire to take up the heavy burden of governing, which so many men seek to evade.

It would be unjust, unwise, and impolitic to impose that burden on the great mass of women throughout the country who do not wish for it, to gratify the comparatively few who do.

It has been strongly urged that without the right of suffrage women are and will be subjected to great oppression and injustice.

But every one who has examined the subject at all knows that without female suffrage legislation for years has improved and is still improving the condition of woman. The disabilities imposed upon her by the common law have, one by one, been swept away until in most of the States she has the full right to her property and all, or nearly all the rights which can be granted without impairing or destroying the marriage relation. These changes have been wrought by the spirit of the

age, and are not, generally at least, the result of any agitation by women in their own behalf.

Nor can women justly complain of any partiality in the administration of justice. They have the sympathy of judges and particularly of juries to an extent which would warrant loud complaint on the part of their adversaries of the sterner sex. Their appeals to legislatures against injustice are never unheeded, and there is no doubt that when any considerable part of the women of any State really wish for the right to vote it will be granted without the intervention of Congress.

Any State may grant the right of suffrage to women. Some of them have done so to a limited extent, and perhaps with good results. It is evident that in some States public opinion is much more strongly in favor of it than it is in others. Your committee regard it as unwise and inexpedient to enable three-fourths in number of the States, through an amendment to the National Constitution, to force woman suffrage upon the other fourth in which the public opinion of both sexes may be strongly adverse to such a change.

For these reasons, your committee report back said resolution with a recommendation that it be indefinitely postponed.

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